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Indonesia in Timor: "cruel people devoid of love and morality"

PAT WALSH

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Henry Kissinger's cold-blooded dismissal of East Timor as too insignficant for him to waste time on has been dismissed in its turn by more responsible Americans.[1] Growing awareness of the full extent of U.S. military and diplomatic collaboration in Indonesia's violent annexation of East Timor has prompted, *inter alia,* a number of Congressional enquiries. It was to the latest of these, conducted by the House Foreign Operations Committee on 10th June, 1980, that the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) sent me as its representative. With a view to gathering fresh data and lobbying on the broad issues of self-determination, aid and free emigration, I also took the opportunity to visit a number of European countries and Indonesia, but the Indonesian Government's ban on access to East Timor by Australian aid agencies ironically precluded a visit to the specific area of my concerns.

Generally speaking, I was struck by the level of awareness, commitment and frustration about East Timor in all of the countries visited. My enquiries confirmed that East Timor is now a priority concern internationally, that the Australian non-government organizations enjoy strong support and respect for their stance on the issue, and that their policy and analysis of the situation have been essentially correct.

The following report is not an exhaustive treatment and assumes some familiarity with the subject on the part of its readers.

The military/administrative situation in East Timor

The civil administration of East Timor is patterned on that of Indonesia itself and staffed, in the main, by Timorese. Real power, however, lies behind this facade in the hands of the Indonesian military who, despite the smallness of the territory and its severely reduced and debilitated population, are concentrated more heavily in East Timor than in other parts of the archipelago. Recent visitors to East Timor put the number of Indonesian troops at 30,000. Though both are present, the proportion of territorial to combat units was not known. Ultimate authority rests with major military figures outside Timor such as Dading Kalbuardi (Regional Commander, Bali), Benny Moerdani and Sudomo (Intelligence Chiefs, Jakarta) and General Jusuf (Minister for Defence).

The occupying army is supplemented by a large force of Timorese militia (Hansip) who have a well-earned reputation for brutality. Indonesia has employed the divide and rule tactic with some success, cleverly exploiting old political and tribal divisions in both their use of Hansip and their organization of the resettlement sites. At the same time there is concern at high levels in the Indonesian command lest the Hansip policy prove counter-prodctive when the time comes to demob these forces and integrate them into civilian life.

1. This comment is based on a cable from the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Woolcott, to Canberra, dated 17th August, 1975, which was published in the suppressed *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1968-1975* (1980). The relevant section reads:

> The United States might have some influence on Indonesia at present as Indonesia really wants and needs United States assistance in its military programme. But Ambassador Newsom told me last night that he is under instructions from Kissinger personally not to involve himself in discussions on Timor with the Indonesians on the grounds that the United States is involved in enough problems of greater importance overseas at present. The State Department, we understand, instructed the embassy to cut down its reporting on Timor.
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> I will be seeing Newsom on Monday but his present attitude is that United States should keep out of the Portuguese Timor situation and allow events to take their course. His somewhat cynical comment to me was that if Indonesia were to intervene the United States would hope they would do so "effectively, quickly and not use our equipment." (pp. 199-200).

Sources in Jakarta reported that the Indonesian army in East Timor is plagued with suspicions and tensions especially, but not only, between the territorial and combat troops. The same problem affects relations between the civilian and military apparatus. Army officers, for example, often fail to explain their decisions or interfere with decisions made by civilians, further frustrating this powerless group. One source told how the army had ordered badly needed rice seed be sent back to Java. A Timorese official contrasted the Portuguese and Indonesian administrative styles, comparing the relative sensitivity of the Portuguese with the pushiness of the Indonesians who make no allowance for the psychological condition of the people.

Though some officers think the civilians should be given more scope, the military generally believe the security and civil situation demands their continuing heightened presence on the *dwi-fungsi* (dual function) basis. The military, it is argued, must supply the manpower and expertise not otherwise available in East Timor either from the reduced ranks of the Timorese elite or from Indonesian civilians, who, for a variety of reasons, are reluctant to work there.

The weight of evidence, however, strongly suggests that the principal reason for the army's heavy-handed presence in East Timor is the lack of security. The army is not there primarily for development, technical or domestic defence purposes. Until it is confident integration will stick of itself, the military will not run the risks associated with premature withdrawal and civilianization.

East Timor bears all the marks of an occupied country. Passage to and from the territory is restricted to selected individuals and is closely controlled by the military command and Intelligence. Outgoing mail is censored. Phone calls from Dili are monitored. The movements of a handful of foreign aid officials permitted in East Timor are restricted and controlled by the military whom the aid personnel label as paranoic. The travel documents *(surat jalan)* of people — including Indonesian civilians — entering and leaving Dili are examined at fixed checkpoints. Long queues of travellers are asked what is the *Pancasila,* which party did you belong to, who are your friends, where are you going and for how long? In the words of one Indonesian, "the Intelligence treat the people like dogs." Dili citizens must carry identity cards at all times. Various curfews apply in the capital. Intelligence personnel — many of them Chinese, especially those who can speak English and Portuguese — pose as taxi-

drivers and restaurant waiters. People are afraid to speak openly. Penalties in the form of extra taxes and job dismissals continue to be imposed on those who refuse to take out Indonesian citizenship. People visiting Dili to obtain food may take away no more than five kilos of rice and two of sugar to ensure their return and that they do not have enough to pass on to Fretilin. Since the June attack on Dili, a strip of land bordering the southern perimeter of Dili has been converted into a no-man's land as a security measure. Refugees squatting there have had to move within Dili proper. Arrests continue to be made without due process. "Order without law is the norm," as one Indonesian put it. Eight village heads in the eastern sector, where many have family connections with Fretilin, were arrested in the first half of 1980 on suspicion of association with Fretilin. Several hundred people were arrested in Dili consequent on the June assault. Some were released after representations were made by the International Red Cross. A known 98 were still being held in mid-August, 1980, in one or other of the four prisons used for political dissidents.

Most informants believe the attack on Dili in June was carried out by Fretilin with civilian support from within the capital. All the indications are that the Indonesian military took this to be true. A tight curfew was imposed; General Dading Kalbuardi flew in from Bali; the army put on a display of strength; there were mass arrests, tighter security checks and the clearing of a security zone. Three or four prominent Dili Catholics, charged with complicity in the event, were summarily executed by Hansip, in disregard of appeals for clemency from the Bishop of Dili. Unsubstantiated reports of other executions have also circulated.

Estimates of Fretilin numbers range from 300 to 1000. It is generally agreed they are concentrated in the eastern sector, though not confined there. In addition to the June attack, small groups of Fretilin are occasionally encountered in the Dili area. The men in these groups were described as being dirty and long-haired but, though looking for food, respectful in their attitude, strong and armed. The Director of the U.S. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) programme, Frank Carlin, described the guerillas as dedicated commandos who worked in small groups, were very mobile and in good condition. CRS supply trucks had been ambushed by them on a number of occasions. Another source spoke of aid being passed on to Fretilin by sympathetic villagers. Ammunition is used sparingly: "one shot, one head," as an Indonesian expressed it. Whilst the army conducts some search and destroy missions, it would appear the principal Indonesian strategy is to maintain the *status quo,* that is, defending what is

already under Indonesian control and containing Fretilin in the isolated interior. One source, however, quoting military sources in Dili and BAKIN in Jakarta, was convinced the military was planning a major final offensive against Fretilin and would move in a large number of fresh combat battalions for this purpose — possibly towards the end of 1980 or thereafter.

Perhaps the key element in the Indonesian administrative/ military strategy, however, has been the relocation of the bulk of the population in so-called "resettlement sites."

According to most Church and aid officials, the basic purpose of these centres is military strategy and control not, as Indonesian government spokesmen claim, development. One Golkar adviser started frankly that the sites were a counter-insurgency measure patterned on the practice of Thompson in Malaya and General Taylor in Vietnam whose purpose was to indoctrinate the people and isolate them from the guerillas.

There is also general agreement that the sites represent a radical and traumatic departure from the traditional lifestyle of the people and that many are, in the words of an Indonesian churchman, "little better than prisons". Agricultural production, in particular, is suffering because people are not allowed to farm their former holdings or to farm in their accustomed manner. Vast tracts of fertile land lie unexploited whilst people are held in these new concentrations dependent on outside aid. This separation from their land and enforced departure from traditional tribal groupings and the decentralized, small group, pattern characteristic of the past, is also socially and culturally detrimental. The International Red Cross believes the new centres are to be permanent. Indonesian and Timorese clergy, and CRS, all believe the people should be allowed to leave. CRS, according to its New York planning officer, John Donnelly, would prefer to finance the people's return to their land rather than the development of these centres. Whether CRS, the nature of whose collaboration with the Indonesian military leaves much to be desired, implements this preference in practice during the next three years of its work in East Timor, remains to be seen.[2] Whatever the case, there is no doubt this policy of denying land to the population is a recipe for built-in dependence and potential disaster, and, as such, it is part of the aid problem, not its solution.

2. This general assessment is shared by Donald Weatherbee of the University of South Carolina. Reporting on his visit to East Timor, 30th May-4th June, 1980, Weatherbee comments:

> A new, structural problem exists inhibiting agricultural development in East Timor . . . The restrictions imposed on access to land away from the centers means that the larger populations

An incident related by a CRS official in Jakarta illustrates well that army thinking is not primarily developmental. One village south of Manatuto had already been relocated twice because of low crop yield. The CRS man was on the spot when the local military commander said, waving his hand, that he would shift the camp again to a spot higher up. When the CRS official tentatively suggested ("one does not presume to advise the military") that a soil sample be taken first, the commander arbitrarily dismissed the idea as irrelevant.

The preoccupation of the military with security and pacification has not gone unchallenged within the regime. A memorandum prepared within Golkar early in 1980 and directed to the high command urges what it calls a programme of "strategic preventive counter-insurgency" in East Timor. According to the memorandum, positive development at all levels of Timorese life must form the centre of this programme because, "the social and material cost of a preventative programme is always cheaper than repressive measures. The urge to embrace must exceed the urge to strike." The memorandum, it is understood, fell on deaf ears. Civilianization and development are not priorities as a brief examination of the broad economic situation further demonstrates.

Due largely to the work of the international agencies, the Biafra-like situation of 1978-80 has passed. Nevertheless, the situation remains precarious. The economy has not been restored to working order, the people are not self-reliant and were the agencies on whom the bulk of the population depend to leave the situation is likely to regress to its earlier catastrophic state. Because of this, the International Red Cross will continue its work until April 1981, and possibly beyond, depending on its review of the situation at that point, whilst CRS is to stay for a further three years, emphasizing development.

Only limited cultivation has been conducted and the mediocre harvest returns have provided only temporary relief. Markets are functioning again in a number of centres but the marginal surplus from village gardens available for sale yields little in the way of cash return. Unemployment is widespread. Coffee and garden produce are brought cheaply by Chinese-administered army-controlled monopolies such as P. T. Denok (controlled by General Benny Moerdani), thereby denying the people access to

> have to be supported on less land . . . Flying over East Timor by helicopter, one is impressed by the thousands of acres of fields — for corn, dry rice etc. . . . — now going back to waste . . . the policy of denying land to the population may have to be rethought . . . (lest it) prove to be both economically and politically counter-productive (pp. 19-22 *passim).*

other markets and better prices. Consumer prices are higher than in Jakarta. Dili shops are well-stocked but few can afford to buy. Complaints about the cost of living are widespread. Very few Timorese overseas are not sending money back to East Timor to support relatives. In these conditions, the tens of thousands of widows and orphans are especially vulnerable. The medical situation is also very serious, compounded by the lack of trained Timorese personnel and acute shortage of doctors from the outside.

Though the Indonesian Government claims to have spent U.S.$75 million on development in East Timor since 1976 and to have budgeted a further U.S.$37 million for the 1980-81 fiscal year, much of this appears to have been spent, showcase style, on cosmetic improvements in the capital and on education, the importance of which as a means of Indonesianization has not been overlooked. General agricultural development, however, despite its fundamental importance, has been neglected. The resettlement centre policy and the military preoccupation with security are responsibie for this.

The Indonesian Catholic Church is particularly concerned at the likely impact of Jakarta's future development plans on the people. A paper presented to Indonesian church leaders in July, 1980, argues that the people will be exploited and impoverished by large-scale projects which, it is feared, will mainly benefit a corrupt elite. According to the paper, grand schemes and large injections of foreign capital, personnel and consumer goods, are not in the best interests of the people. The objective should be to develop an autonomous economy based on the human and natural resources of the territory. The paper warns, "If this is disregarded, the Timorese will certainly become mere coolies, a one hundred per cent contradiction of their deep desire to develop in an autonomous way. The resulting frustration will be dangerous."

The Churches and East Timor PAT WALSH

Resistance to integration with Indonesia is not confined to Fretilin or guerilla warfare. While the Indonesian military has been partially successful in its attempts to separate the people physically from Fretilin, it has failed psychologically to overcome the deep-seated anti-Indonesian sentiment felt by the Timorese. Indonesian church people, aid workers, and the military are alike the subjects of this antipathy. As one Indonesian church

worker reported: "Non-military Indonesians are also perceived as associates of the army, (which is seen by the people to be composed) of cruel people devoid of love and morality." This same person changed his name because the Timorese do not like his Javanese name. They are reluctant to talk to him for fear he might pass on information. They particularly avoided him when he made the mistake of wearing calf-length boots which the people associated with military uniform.

The enormous suffering and humiliation at the hands of a foreign nationality are responsible for this bitterness. "All the people are 'Fretilin' in this attitude," according to a Timorese priest. The people are known not to want to learn *Bahasa Indonesia,* to choose Catholic schools ahead of government schools, to collaborate with the guerilla resistance within limits, to be "confused and alienated" by life in the resettlement sites and to want to leave East Timor in large numbers (the Australian Imigration Department quotes a known figure of 20,000).

An important focus for these sentiments is the head of the East Timor Catholic Church, Mgr. da Costa Lopes. Not only is he refusing to integrate the Timor Catholic Church with the Indonesian Catholic Church but he also continues to appeal for a UN solution, a genuine plebiscite to determine the people's wishes. The full significance of this challenge to Indonesia becomes clear when it is realized that the proportion of Catholics in East Timor has dramatically risen from some 30% of the total population pre-1975 to more than 50% at the present time. Whatever the depth of faith of these recent converts from traditional Timorese religious beliefs, their alignment with the indigenous and highly influential Catholic Church is further evidence of their aspirations not to mention, of course, their search for security and protection.

The Indonesian Catholic Church respects the autonomy of the church in East Timor and supported by the Vatican, which has warned it to avoid exerting pressure for integration, has adopted a policy of detached service. This policy stops short of active political support. As an Indonesian churchman put it: the Indonesian Church "cannot help (the Church in Timor) in the way a large part of the Timorese people would like, namely to win freedom from Indonesia and become an autonomous Timorese State."

For its part, the Vatican, which has assumed direct control over the East Timor Church, is ambivalent in its attitude. The Vatican Secretariat of State regards East Timor as an occupied country in which there has been no genuine act of self-determination and will not recognize East Timor as part of Indonesia until the people and/or the UN indicate this is their wish. On the other hand, the Vatican has declined to make this position public, does not contribute to the annual UN deliberations on East Timor through its permanent UN representative, and is represented in Jakarta by a Nuncio who accepts the Indonesian presence in East Timor as a *fait accompli* and believes the situation under Indonesia is better than it was under Portugal.

Unfortunately, the sins of omission of the international Catholic Church have been exceeded only by the sins of commission of its Protestant brethren in Indonesia. Hostage to its fear of Islam and its own deep inferiority complex, the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI) has solidly aligned itself with the Indonesian Government on the East Timor issue. DGI reports, *inter alia,* blame Fretilin for the suffering of the Timorese, minimize the death toll, support the government resettlement programme, call for transmigration, and blame the Australian press for the failure of the family reunion programme. In practice, its accelerated East Timor aid programme and the accelerated growth of the Protestant community there have been conducted in close collaboration with the Indonesian military with a view to promoting integration.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the DGI approach has been the subject of intense debate in recent times within sections of the international Protestant community and that the Australian Council of Churches has decided it cannot contribute to the DGI East Timor programme but must channel its development aid through the East Timor Catholic Church instead.

One might be tempted to excuse the DGI on the grounds that the Indonesian Government's campaign of misinformation and secrecy on East Timor has concealed the facts and misled the well-intentioned. Though this may have been legitimate once, it is no longer so. East Timor is no longer a closely kept military secret in Indonesia. Nor are the Government's alleged reasons for annexing its neighbour universally accepted any longer. Ignorance has given way to a sense of distress, even anger, at what has transpired in East Timor especially amongst those who have been there, and a growing number of well-placed Indonesians accept that East Timor is "our responsibility" at least in the area of individual human rights.

Whilst it is to be hoped that matters such as free emigration, the reunion of separated Timorese families, the disbanding of the resettlement centres, and respect for human rights are quickly attended to, there can be no doubt that self-determination remains the basic issue — both as a broad Timorese aspiration and as the key to the resolution of the conflict.

The initiatives of the present Portuguese Government in this regard cannot be ignored. Regarded by the UN as the legal administering authority of East Timor, and bound by its own Constitution to promote self-determination there, Portugal has recently announced its intention to seek a political settlement of the issue, based on self-determination. As Fretilin's Ramos Horta argues, Indonesia has much to gain and nothing to lose by co-operating. Whether, in this belligerent Reagan era, Portugal will receive the support it is seeking from Australia and other countries, may be debatable. But it cannot be denied, that, on the face of it, a new opportunity for peace has been presented to all who seek to build a just world.

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